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HIGH SCHOOL POLICY

OF

MASSACHUSETTS.

BY

REV. W. BARROWS,

READING, MASS.

From the New Englander for November, 1858.

NEW HAVEN:

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THE HIGH SCHOOL POLICY OF MASSACHUSETTS

THE assumption of the state is that the highest intelligence is the highest good of the entire population. Ignorance, vice, and crime, are known to be both dwarfing and expensive to society. It is felt to be better economy to sustain the common school and normal school than the reform school, the college than the penitentiary. The state assumes also, that the physical, mental and moral treasures, embraced in what we call childhood, belong, as so much capital, to the state as well as to the parents. And so the state undertakes to provide for, invest, develop, and look after this childhood treasure, in such a way that it shall pay the highest dividends to the commonwealth.

And no distinctions in social condition, as marked by wealth or poverty, by native or foreign parentage, by religious differences, or by character high or low, divert the state from her one purpose, to give to all, equally, the best possible common school advantages. The state, as the will of the mass impersonated, nay, as a divine agent, goes by all parents and guardians, over all obstacles, through wealth and poverty, alike into the noblest mansion and the turf shanty, till it finds the child. And while that is between the years of five and fifteen, the state offers to it, and presses on it, quarterly, and annually, and at public expense, a good education. Without hat or shoe the child may be, but it must not be without text-book and teacher. Half fed, that child may leave some humble cottage, or crazy garret, but the same school-room and fire, the same teacher and apparatus, are prepared for him that are prepared for the son of affluence. For him of pennyless parentage the public treasury is as full and as free as it is for the heir of the highest tax-payer. His blood may be all foreign, or a cross of all the bloods of polyglot Europe. It is the same to him as though he were a direct descendant of John Hancock. The state assumes the right, and the responsibility to give to that child,

at public expense, the best possible common school education. And so every child in the state has opened for it a substantial highway to the forces, duties and honors of manhood. This is the noble theory of Massachusetts, and the fruits of it, as a working policy, are among the brighter glories of this ancient commonwealth.

§ I. *In carrying out this policy the demand for a High School is obvious and reasonable.*

For when the number of pupils in a given school, being of different studies and attainments, becomes so great as to need two teachers, it is obviously best to divide that school on the basis of scholarship. One division is then a High School with reference to the other. And when this one becomes so large as to necessitate another division, that division should also be made on the same principle as the first. Then the division embracing the pupils of the highest attainments will constitute a High School in comparison with the other two. And it is reasonable to continue these divisions, elevating each High School higher and higher till one of two things is obtained.

The process should continue till there are not pupils enough to constitute a still higher school, or till those wishing to pursue more advanced studies are prepared to leave for the scientific and professional school, or for college. Of the soundness of this policy of grading schools and classifying scholars according to studies and attainments, practical educators have no question. Indeed, most of the towns in the state have so graded and classified as to have their lower and upper schools; that is, they have their High School. And this, each town or city has raised higher and higher, as expediency dictated. Some towns, with a sufficient number of pupils, have provided the means for a school affording all the advantages of an ordinary academy. And when a town has this number of scholars, who seek such advantages, the state urges it to support such a school, as its best policy. Its support is one of those home provisions that our practical sense at once suggests and adopts,

and nothing but insidious and slow working influences have established the practice in many towns, of sending their youth abroad for academic instruction.

§ II. *The earliest policy of the Massachusetts colony secured this obviously reasonable provision of a High School.*

As early as 1647, a law was passed binding every town of one hundred families to support a High School, whose teacher should be "able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university." The penalty of non-compliance was five pounds per annum. In 1671, this penalty was increased to ten pounds; in 1683 to twenty pounds. In 1718 it was raised to thirty pounds for every town of one hundred and fifty families, and ten pounds additional for every additional fifty families. And afterwards, as the wealth of the towns increased, the General Court increased the penalty. And we should remember that this legal provision for the education of the children, even for being "fitted for the university," was made within thirty years of the landing of the Pilgrims. It was while the forest and the Indian yet frowned on them, while the soil was but little broken by agriculture, and while buildings, roads, bridges, and the most of the primary comforts of civilization were in their small beginnings. And when that law was passed, the entire population of the colony was not probably over twenty one thousand souls, while the entire colonial valuation would fall below that of many a private citizen of to-day in the state. Such was their compass of thought and pecuniary liberality for the good of posterity. Richly have we entered into the fruit of their labors; for this colonial policy, enlarged, invigorated, and at length adopted by the state, has become the right arm of our strength. To no portion of the civil policy of our ancestors do we owe so much, as to their common school system, culminating in the public High School.

But this system of the indiscriminate education of all the children of the state at public expense gradually lost its efficiency. Of the causes of so sad a result we have now to take notice in unfolding the state policy with reference to the High School,

and the relative importance of such a school to the entire system of popular education.

§ III. *The imminent danger of the common school system of Massachusetts in the first quarter of the present century.*

The Board of Education, in their Twentieth Report, made the statement "that the public schools were losing their efficiency, and the system itself its vitality. This alarmed patriotic and good men, and gave rise, in 1834, to provision for a school fund, and to the establishment, in 1837, of the Board of Education."*

The peril was indeed imminent. "Patriotic and good men were alarmed" with reason. The Honorable Horace Mann, in his First Report, as Secretary of the Board of Education, speaks of the state of the public schools as "calculated to excite the deepest alarm in every mind which sees the character of the next generation of men foreshadowed and prophesied in the direction which is given to the children of this."

The causes, nature and extent of this peril of a system, so vitally important to the highest welfare of the state, may be expressed in few words.

In speaking of the causes of this deplorable state of things, the Board of Education, in their Twentieth Report, as quoted above, use this language: "With the increase of population, the concentration of wealth, and the division of sects and of classes, *numerous private schools sprang up*, and it was found that the public schools were losing their efficiency, and the system itself its vitality." Here is indicated the root of the evil, and one sentence declares it. By common consent the High School feature of the old colonial system of 1647, had gone into disuse, and the private school system had taken its place. So those deeply interested for their own children, and having the wealth to do as they pleased, diverted their children, their money and their interest, from the public to the private school. The consequences were natural, necessary, and full of evil for the community at large.

In the public school the grade of studies and of scholarship

* Twentieth Annual Report, p. 5.

tell off. Inferior teachers were consequently tolerated. The public school houses were neglected as to location, and architectural improvements for utility, comfort and taste. The office of Prudential Committee, whose duty it was to procure a teacher, became a burden bereft of honor, and was shuffled off on some absentee, or passed through the district in rotation, as a trial that each must share in turn. So loose became the public sentiment that the law of 1826 allowed the committee to engage the teacher without personal examination. Later legislation corrected this error. Yet, in 1838, Mr. Mann says: "From the best information I have been able to obtain, I am led to believe that in a majority of instances the examination is either wholly omitted, or is formal and superficial."* The law required that the teacher should have a certificate of approbation from the superintending committee before commencing his school. Yet, says Mr. Mann, "From facts which have come to my knowledge, I am constrained to believe that in two-thirds at least of the towns in the commonwealth, this provision of the law is more or less departed from."†

There came also into the schools a great and perplexing variety of text-books, making classification and reasonable progress in the pupils impossible. An indifferent community would not sustain the committee in obeying the laws that required a uniformity of text-books. Each new teacher introduced his favorite author; stranger scholars brought their books from another district, or town, or state; the old ones of others were supposed by the parents to be good while they held together, and when one disappeared, leaf by leaf, like those of the Sibyl, it was replaced by the one last published.‡ So was

* First Annual Report of Board of Education, p. 28.

† *Ib.* p. 31.

‡ It is fresh in our own memory, that at a much later period than this, we found, as Superintending Committee, *ten* different arithmetics in one district school. And we remember, too, that cloudy Clan-Alpine gathering of the constituency, to hear our reasons for excluding the motley ten, to give place to Greenleaf's series. And we remember, too, that one man, the head of a large family, who had but lately become able to read in simple sentences, gave it as his deliberate opinion that Greenleaf's Arithmetic was not fit for his children. We never told the author, being tender of his feelings, and so he has since published several other mathematical works. And we very distinctly remember, too, that all the little mathematicians in that school did use Greenleaf's Arithmetic.

confusion confounded in the text-books in about one-third of the towns.* And so indifferent had the mass become to securing the poor advantages of the common school as it was, that in winter about one-third of those of legal age for attendance, absented themselves, and two-fifths in summer.† Both official and parental visitation of the schools was sadly neglected. In 1837, the state employed about three thousand teachers. "But," says the same indefatigable secretary of the Board, "they have not one thousandth part of the supervision which watches the same number of persons, having the care of cattle, or spindles, or of the retail of shop-goods."‡

Now it is a highly practical question to the friends of popular education, what had thus weakened and degraded a public school system, originally and inherently so good. Doubtless other and lighter causes had their influence, but the main cause was one and distinct. The colonial feature of the system, that made provision for a High School, in towns of one hundred families and over, and the state feature that qualified this requisition so as to embrace only towns of five hundred families and over, was overlooked and forgotten. Thus the system failed to provide for those pupils who had passed the simpler rudiments of an English education. So those who felt the need that their children should have what had been thus dropped from a perfect system, were forced to the establishment and patronage of private schools. Thus their children, and money, and interest, were turned into private channels. This was the fatal crisis in the working of the system. Here and herein began the era of decline. And for thirty years or so, prior to 1836, this decline was rapid.

§ IV. *Significant facts illustrating the danger to which our public school system was exposed by the extension of the private school system.*

By private schools is meant any and all, whether incorporated or not, that are sustained by private funds, and receive only the patronage of contributors.

* First Annual Report of Board of Education, p. 35. †Ib. p. 37. ‡Ib. p. 40.

Twenty-five years ago the common school system had become so deteriorated, insufficient and unacceptable, that about *one-sixth* of all the children in the state, of suitable age for the school room, had been withdrawn from the public, and placed in the private school. The amount of money paid for these in tuition, was \$328,026.75. At the same time the amount of public tax money expended on the other five-sixths of the children, was only \$465,228.04. That is, about three-sevenths of all money, paid for the education of the children of the state, was paid for the tuition of one-sixth of them in private schools.* Now it is perfectly in accordance with what is well known of the principles and practices of human nature to assume that as the private school money increased, in this case, the public school money decreased. One gained, while five lost, in this division of the educational interest. About the same time, or in 1836, there were in the state but *fourteen* public High Schools, such as the ancient policy contemplated, exclusive of those in Boston. Yet the number of private schools was *eight hundred and fifty-four*.† We make note here of the foresight of our Puritan ancestors, who anticipated the demand for high school instruction, and provided for it by statute in such way that the poor, as well as the rich, could enjoy it. And we make note, too, of the folly of their posterity, who, when they felt the need of superior educational advantages, provided them, it is true, but in more than eight hundred private schools, to which only one in six of all the children had admission.

Another illustrative fact will set the same points in a clearer light. At the time already mentioned, there were twenty-nine towns required by law to sustain a High School, that failed to meet the requisition. These towns paid by tax for the public schools, \$74,313, and for tuition in private schools, \$47,776. That is, about two-fifths of all their school money was devoted to private schools, and to a favored few of all their children.‡ The prostration of public schools, and the depression of popular education under such a policy, were inevitable. During the time in question, the tuition per scholar in the public

* First Annual Report of the Board of Education, pp. 57-8. †Ib. p. 52. ‡Ib.

schools, was \$2.62 per annum, while in the private schools it was more than \$10, to say nothing of the other extra expenses in sending a child away from home to school.* And so these twenty-nine towns deliberately set aside the law that required of each of them a High School. Thus they forced the more wealthy and noble spirited of their citizens, to put their children and \$50,000 per annum, and much of their educational interest, into private educational establishments. Of course they impoverished themselves, and wronged the mass of the children, by forcing into private limits literary advantages that should have been made common to all, in the needed and legally demanded High School. As we look back on this historical fact, it surprises us. We wonder at the folly of those towns that thus thrust good away from them. We wonder at those parents who thus gave their children a stone, when they might almost as easily have given bread. And yet many a town in Massachusetts is doing the same thing this present year!

On this sad state of things, Mr. Mann makes these important remarks in his report for 1837. One class of the people tolerates, from apathy, a depression in the common schools. "There is another class who affix so high a value upon the culture of their children, and understand so well the necessity of a skillful preparation of means for its bestowment, that they turn away from the common schools, in their depressed state, and seek elsewhere the helps of a more enlarged and thorough education. * * * One remains fully content with the common school; the other builds up the private school, or the academy. The education fund is thus divided into two parts. Neither of the halves does a quarter of the good which might be accomplished by a union of the whole. One party pays an adequate price and has a poor school; the other has a good school, but at more than four-fold cost. Were their funds and their interest combined, the poorer school might be as good as the best; and the dearest almost as low as the cheapest." "Some few persons in a village or town, finding the advantages of the common school inadequate to their wants, unite to

* Twentieth Report of the Board of Education.

establish a private one. They transfer their children from the former to the latter. The heart goes with the treasure. The common school ceases to be visited by those whose children are in the private schools. Such parents decline serving as committee men. They have no personal motive which leads them to vote for, or advocate an increase of the town's annual appropriation for schools, to say nothing of the temptation to discourage such increase in indirect ways, or even to vote directly against it."

In such a posture were our public school interests in 1836. Poor common schools and good private schools; a division of money and of interest for education, weakening to the common good; and a separation of pupils into the favored and the neglected;—these were no good omens. And the anxiety of thoughtful and public spirited men did not arise too early, or move too deeply.

§ V. *The opening of a new era in the public school policy.*

It was evident that something must be done to save the cause of popular education. Consultation was had among its friends. Outside influences worked themselves into legislative action in the session of 1836-7. By an act of April 20th, 1837, the Board of Education was established. Its primary aim was to take such action with reference to popular education, "that all children in the commonwealth, who depend upon common schools for instruction, may have the best education which those schools can be made to impart."*

Then began a work of thorough investigation. The system, in its theory and workings, was scrutinized. The deterioration already alluded to was exposed, and the tendencies of the more intelligent, solicitous and wealthy, to forsake the system, as seen in eight hundred and fifty-four private schools, were pointed out, together with their sad results. And while other causes, more or less powerful, were found to be working

* Statutes of 1837, c. 241, § 2.

against the free system, one cause stood prominent. *The main defect was found to be in the cardinal departure from the High School part of the system.* The system, thus limited and weakened, did not meet the demands of a large and influential portion of the community. So they were abandoning it. The efforts of the Board were at once turned to remedy this defect. This they sought to accomplish by restoring the system as it was at the first, and so making the common school, in its higher grades, in the large towns, all that could be desired in preparing students for college, and for those semi-professional callings that may be filled without a collegiate course. In this way they hoped to bring back to the free schools, the pupils, the wealth, the intelligent interest, and the teaching talent that had been so unfortunately and so naturally diverted to private and restricted channels.

But to make the town High School all that was expensively sought for in the private school, a better class of public teachers was needed. Hence, the state established Normal Schools, expressly to provide such teachers. Two were opened in 1839, and a third in 1840, and a fourth in 1854. The demand increasing for a higher grade of teachers for the High Schools, and the policy being settled to make them all that was desired in private institutions, the state, in 1853, founded forty-eight scholarships. The specific object of this act was to educate, at state expense, in part, and by collegiate course of study, teachers of the first quality for the High Schools.

This new era in our common school interests was inaugurated by the Board of Education, in 1837, and has been more hopefully opening to the present time. Such men as Everett and Sparks were members of the first Board, who marked out broader and brighter paths for the masses of the children of Massachusetts. And nobly has this new movement succeeded, as a few facts will show.

During the progress of this new impulse to the cause of popular education, the state has nearly doubled its population, with a proportionate increase of pupils. Yet the number of academies and private schools has fallen off one hundred and

eleven, and the number of pupils in them has also decreased three thousand nine hundred and eighty-five. This is a significant fact, when we remember that while this decrease has been going on, the number of pupils in the state has nearly doubled. Of course, there has been a corresponding and very happy reaction in favor of the free schools. During this time about one hundred High Schools have been established, free to all, and, doubtless, receiving many or the most of those four thousand pupils who have fallen off from the private schools. The average appropriation of money per scholar through the state has risen from \$2.62, in 1837, to \$5.82, in 1857. Another item of auspicious change should go into this record. In 1835, \$80,000 were expended in the state on the public school houses. But in 1855, this sum rose to \$588,213.55.

Here, then, we have about one hundred free High Schools springing up in the place of one hundred and eleven private schools and academies discontinued, an appropriation of more than double the amount of public money per scholar, and the money expended on public school-houses increased more than seven fold. And of the character of these high schools the present secretary of the Board of Education, Ex-Governor Boutwell, says, "they have furnished a better practical education than could have been obtained thirty years ago in any institution in Massachusetts."*

We do not hazard the truth by connecting this increase of public school money with the decrease of private school money, and this seven-fold investment in public school houses with a withdrawal of wealth and interest and four thousand children from the private schools abandoned. These facts indicate a wonderful revolution. It is the act of an immense power. And as a voluntary change, the reason for it must be very strong and very evident, else the people would not have consented. The secret of the revolution is found in the working purpose of the state to restore our public school system to its primitive integrity, and make the common school in its higher grades meet all educational wants this side of the

* Twentieth Report, p. 36.

college and professional school. The *economy, utility, and democracy* of this measure have wrought the revolution.

The remark should here be made that this effort for the elevation of the public school has not been in any ungenerous want of appreciation of the private school. The private school was one of the necessities of intellectual life, and generously furnished, when the common school system was rendered defective and insufficient by the disuse of its colonial High School element. Though expensive and partial, it was the best substitute.

When the High School element thus went out of the public school, and became a private school, it did more than depart. It withdrew a vitality from the lower school left, that was necessary to its vigorous continuance. It withdrew the best scholars, the higher studies, and much of the supporting wealth and interest. Thus weakened and emasculated, the common school drooped. So the private school became a burden to those who could enjoy it, and a blight to those who could not. In the effort now being made, and above sketched to make the public school all that the patron of the private can wish, and so absorb the latter in the former, a double good is sought; relief from the burdensome expense of private schools, and the making of private school advantages common and free to all the children of the state.

It is as desirable as it is inevitable that some private schools remain. Bradford and Holyoke, Philips and Williston academies cannot become obsolete. The towns that for good reasons cannot sustain a High School need such retreats. And if every town had its school where all should be taught that is taught in academies, still a few of them would be indispensable, that private and corporate interest might have a field in which to work, and stimulate, and, if possible, lead off the public schools into better methods and higher grades.

§ VI. *The tendency and ultimate destiny of the present movement in our common school system.*

The historical and documentary evidence now presented reveals the true intent of the state policy and purpose. It is to

offer to all the children of the commonwealth, without regard to wealth, or family, or social grade, or religious distinction, free, equal, and the best school advantages that can be had before entering the college or professional school. To do this, it is the policy and wish to establish the High School wherever the population, location, and just patronage will warrant, and to make it such as to draw to its support those contributions of children, friends and interest, that have heretofore gone abroad, and so impoverished the school of the people. The aim is to make it both the interest and the pleasure of the rich to share with the poor, what they expend for school advantages on their own more fortunate children. The aim is to unite public and private educational outlays for a common good, and at the same time make each party more prosperous by the union, than either could be separate. For the last thirty years, this has been the policy of the friends of education in Massachusetts, and yearly it has gained confidence and vigor by its utility.

Says the Hon. Mr. Boutwell, in his report, as secretary, for the year 1856, "All should be convinced, if possible, that public schools, except for strictly professional culture, are at once more beneficial, and economical. * * * Private or select schools do not thrive, except such as are professional in their character, or amply endowed, where the public schools are what they ought everywhere to be. And where such public schools exist, they furnish better education, within the limits occupied, than can be furnished by any private school." "It is apparent that a town of two, four or six thousand inhabitants, can educate its children cheaper, when it employs but one system, than it can when it employs two," the public and the private. "The existence of private schools to do the work ordinarily done in the public schools is strong evidence that the latter are not what they ought to be."*

Not so rapidly as could be wished, but steadily and inevitably the undertaking progresses. Legislation is directly and indirectly aiding the movement. Last year the state granted pecuniary aid to 208 pupils in the four normal schools, that the

* XXth Report, pp. 44, 45.

people may be furnished with a better class of teachers. In the report last quoted, the board of education indicate their own and legislative views on this topic of High Schools. Speaking of the forty-eight state scholarships by which a collegiate education is to be given to teachers expressly intended for the High Schools, they say that this policy "will connect in some measure the primary and High Schools with the colleges. This is well. The symmetry of the general system would require that this connection should be, as it is in some of the states, still more close. The system is one."*

The intention is that there shall be no intermediate step between the town High School and the college, or scientific school for one who wishes to enter either of the latter.

In thus unfolding from official sources the High School policy of the state, and in showing the inefficiency of the other common schools in large towns without the High School, and in pointing out the happy results during the last twenty years in restoring it to its original place, the most of the reasons have been given, why such schools should be established in all tolerably compact towns of three thousand inhabitants and more. Yet there remain a few reasons for the policy, worthy of separate and specific statement.

§ VII. *The economy of the High School system for a town.*

The cost is an important question. The reasonable demands for money by direct taxation make it imperative that the expense of a High School be carefully considered by any town proposing it. The annual cost of an ordinary school of this kind, is from ten to twelve hundred dollars. In towns of three thousand inhabitants, the annual amount of taxes is about \$10,000. So the cost of the school to each tax-payer would be about one-tenth of his entire bill. In 1853, twenty-three towns in eastern Massachusetts, and the most, if not all of them, supporting a High School, paid the average of \$6.96 in taxes for all purposes on every thousand dollars of taxable property. In

* XXth Report, p. 6.

a town paying this rate of tax, a man would pay from seventy to ninety cents on every thousand dollars, for which he is taxed, in supporting an ordinary High School. If he pays but a poll-tax, the school costs him nothing.

Now here is revealed a system of vast economy to a town. For a fair High School answers all the purposes of an academy, while the expense of a pupil sent from home to an academy will average more than \$200 per annum. And so a town sending but ten pupils away to school sends out of town twice the amount of money necessary to procure similar advantages for forty or fifty children at home in a High School. And yet many towns that feel unable to support a High School, keep from ten to thirty children constantly out of town at school. And their attainments in scholarship are no better than they would be in a good High School at home. It is true in the estimated expenses of the child at the academy, board is included, which must also be furnished if he study at home. But a parent well knows that the cost of board and outfit for a scholar at home, is trifling, and scarcely felt, compared with the raising of that amount of money to be sent away with the child.

And so the economy of the system in question is seen to be vast, even if all who wish the advantages of a High School are able to send their children abroad. Yet as matter of fact but a small portion of the parents can afford to do this.

§ VIII. *Especially, therefore, is it good policy for those in ordinary circumstances, as to property, to sustain a High School.*

With such, a good education is the principal, if not the only inheritance that they can give their children. That education must be a large part of the capital, the stock in trade, with which the child will enter the walks of business. If this education be restricted to the rudiments of the ordinary district school, that child cannot compete to advantage with the one who has had the superior preparations of the academy for the higher grades of business. The parent may wish most earnestly to send the child abroad a year. Perhaps in his straitened circumstances he may eke out the means to send his

boy or girl away for one term. Now the cost for that term would pay his taxes on \$2000 for a High School for *forty years!* And if he have the family of John Rogers, the martyr, and graduate them all at the High School, the tax will be no more than for a solitary child. And here we see the parental kindness of the state, toward the poor, in both allowing and *requiring* a town of five hundred families to support a High School. The state thus gives to the poor the power to confer on their children at home as good an education, excepting a collegiate and professional one, as the rich can find for theirs abroad. And hence, Mr. Mann has so truthfully said, that the state offers the High School “especially to the children of the poor, who cannot incur the expenses of a residence from home in order to attend such a school.”*

§ IX. *The High School system opens a way for an easy yet profitable benevolence on the part of the wealthy.*

They are able to send their children abroad. This ability is their good fortune. But it is not so with the majority of parents. In the ways of Providence it is otherwise. Yet their children are as dear to them, a good education is as much coveted by them, while their children need the aid of it more than those of their wealthy neighbors. It is an easy and most efficient benevolence, therefore, for the rich to sustain by their votes, and taxes, and interest, and children, a good High School. They thus provide as good instruction for their children as they can find for them abroad, and at vastly less cost. At the same time they have the luxury of seeing that their benevolent policy confers most important and almost indispensable blessings on their less favored neighbors, that they could obtain in no other way.

§ X. *The High School policy is essentially and nobly democratic.*

With much of truth it may be said that the academy, the scientific school, the college, and the professional school, are

* First Annual Report of Board of Education, pp. 55-6.]

for the rich. But the town High School is the people's college. The commonwealth founds it for all her children. In admission to its privileges, she allows no regard to be paid to wealth, or rank, or grade of any kind. In it is no aristocracy, except of talent and scholarship. Till they pass beyond that institution, all are as the children of one family in the eye of the state. This is parental, republican, democratic, in the noblest sense of that word. Your poverty is your misfortune. But in a matter so important and vital, as the education of your children, the state comes to your relief, and provides that your children may share as well as the richest in preparation for the honorable toils of life. A strange sight, therefore, it is, to see a man vote this offered institution away from his children, when it is vastly better than any educational advantage he can give them, and the best that the state can offer. His ballot thus robs them of their last aid above the privileges of an ordinary district school.

In speaking of the High Schools in the state, in 1854, Dr. Sears makes these remarks: "There are no better schools in the commonwealth than some of our public High Schools, and to these families of the highest character now prefer to send their children. This makes our schools common in the best sense of the word, common to all classes, nurseries for a truly republican feeling, public sanctuaries, where the children of the commonwealth fraternally meet, and where the spirit of caste and of party can find no admittance."*

§ XI. *The High School policy draws out much of the best talent of the state, that otherwise would have been unimproved.*

Under a democratic government like ours, where talent is the passport to eminence, the middling and lower classes furnish the larger part of the influential men. They come from families who ordinarily cannot afford to patronize the private school system to any great extent. The only good hope for such, is to bring the academy home to them in the form of the public High School. By it, talented and ambitious scholars are

* Eighteenth Report, p. 59.

tempted forward and led up into positions where the community can use them, and be justly proud of them. Says Dr. Sears, in the report just quoted: "The effect of this order of schools in developing the intellect of the commonwealth, in opening channels of free communication between all the more flourishing towns of the state, and the colleges, or schools of science, is just beginning to be observed. They discover the treasures of native intellect that lie hidden among the people; make young men of superior minds conscious of their powers; bring those, who are destined by nature to public service, to institutions suited to foster their talents; give a new impulse to the colleges, not only by swelling the number of their students, but by raising the standard of excellence in them; and finally, give to the public, with all the advantages of education, men who otherwise might have remained in obscurity, or have acted their part, struggling with embarrassments and difficulties."

In another passage in this report, Dr. Sears brings out the double fact that these schools are furnishing to our colleges a better class of students, and a higher grade of scholarship. "We have the testimony of gentlemen connected with colleges, that from the time they began to receive students from these recently established High Schools, the classes coming under their care have been actually improved; that the young men brought forward in these schools, have generally manifested superior energy of mind and will; and that even in those cases where their knowledge of Greek and Latin was found less accurate than that of other students, the reverse of what was generally true, they still possessed a greater amount of general knowledge and various culture, and constituted, on the whole, a better class of students."*

§ XII. *The testimony of experience in favor of this system.*

About one hundred of the towns in the state have adopted it, and with scarcely an exception, they have approved and

* Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education, p. 58.

continued it. Many of them give most emphatic testimony to its utility. Not a few towns approve the system, and would before this have adopted it, but for the difficulty of locating the school. They are without a prominent and thickly settled centre, or have one or more important villages on the borders, or the territorial limits are so large as necessarily to make the location at an impracticable distance from many who would desire the advantages of the school. These are among the most formidable difficulties in the way of adopting the system in the rural districts of the state. Yet even in such towns, where it is a choice of evils, the High School with these difficulties, the academy with its expenses, or neither, many are ready to receive the first, and brave the inconveniences of location. The popularity and adoption of the system are steadily and firmly gaining. Of the many direct testimonials to its utility that might be given from eminent individuals, and from more than half of the three hundred and thirty-two towns in the state, we make room for only one. Says the Honorable Edward Everett: "The great merit of the system is, that it is a public provision for the education of all the children. * * * As the burden of taxation falls on the rich, the children of the poor get a good education gratuitously. * * * I send my child to the public school in Cambridge, because it is the best within my reach. If there were a private school, where he would be better taught, I might think it my duty to send him to it, but I should regard this as an evil."*

Though these words cover the entire school system of Massachusetts, there is no branch of it to which they are more pertinent than the one under consideration.

In concluding the discussion of this exceedingly interesting and practical topic, it remains to notice but one point more.

§ XIII. *This system affords the peculiar advantage of home influences for the child, while he is a student.*

Early departure from the homestead is a moral crisis that many of our youth do not show themselves able to meet. It

* Answer to the Twistleton Circular. Eighteenth Report, p. 91.

comes at a tender age, when judgment is weakest, and passion and impulse strongest. The heart is inexperienced and peculiarly plastic for impressions. The great outlines of character, the prophecies of the coming man, are being drawn out. If a malformation take place at this period, it is organic. It should be remembered that if a home is ever of worth to a child, this is the period when he most needs it. The morning and evening air of the homestead may not be as classic as that of academic halls, but more pure, giving tone and vigor to the forming and unfolding manhood. Many are so confiding, generous, and nobly impulsive, that their character will certainly be shaped by their companions. The success or failure of others is cast on the contingency of spending their Sabbaths at home or abroad. That hallowed day, spent in the sacred privacies of a childhood home, is an antidote to a thousand ruinous influences. All the glittering promises of catalogues and boarding-school circulars, to watch the manners and morals of the pupil, may prove of less worth than the affectionate sympathy of a sister, the gentle words of a mother, and the approving look of a father.

In brief, under this system, all the power of home can be brought to bear on the child, while he is feeling all the forces, and using all the advantages of a good school. The parents can carry forward their system of instruction jointly with the public teacher. So the unnatural, and dangerous, and often fatal divorce of the child from his home is avoided.

We rejoice in the opening and progress of this new era in our school system. The results of the new policy are more than satisfactory. And though twenty years is brief time for an experiment on any great social question, we are already full of hope in this thing. And the prediction of the first Board of Education, in their first Report, is more than verified:

“The voice of reason will not be uttered in vain. Experience, clearly stated in its results, will command respect, and the Board entertain a confident opinion that the increased attention given to the subject, will result in making our system of common school education fully worthy of the intelligence of the present day, and of the ancient renown of Massachusetts.”

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